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NEWS

FROM YOUR MUSEUM

THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

Know your Museum better

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SPRING PROSPECTS

In March and April, with the first breaths of spring, to many comes an urge to dig. For urban and rural dwellers, this is translated into early gardening activity, but for some, the sod they turn must be untouched, for they seek new ores and minerals. Just as the would-be gardener studies his seed catalogues, so the prospector would study the geological maps and reports of the area in which he is interested. In the galleries of the Royal Ontario Museum may be found many aids for the latter study. There he may study ores and minerals similar to those which may be encountered in the land of his choice. The gold specimens, for example, come from many parts of Canada, and show that gold may be found in gravel or placer deposits, and in quartz veins or lode deposits, sometimes even within the same area. To the prospector and mining man, the history of the area is important also, and on this score the scientific staff of the Museum give of their knowledge and experience when the necessary facts can not be found in reports and books.

ANIMALS DON NEW CLOTHES

Animals are indeed fortunate for Mother Nature provides them each year with a new spring outfit, free of charge. In most cases it is a change from a heavy fur coat to a much lighter one of a similar colour, but often of a different shade.

The deer sheds his dull greyish brown winter coat for one of a brighter reddish hue. The red squirrel doffs his bright winter coat with its marked reddish stripe down the back for a duller summer coat of tawny olive. The lynx and snowshoe rabbit lose their snowshoes now that the long thick hair on their feet is no longer necessary for travelling over deep soft snow. The weasels and snowshoe rabbits make the most drastic change as they discard their white winter garments and don brown clothes for the warmer months.

FOSSIL FISHES FOUND

Fossil fishes of the Devonian period, approximately 300 million years old were obtained from a new locality on Gaspe Bay, Quebec, discovered during the last summer by Dr. L. S. Russell of the Royal Ontario Museum. Preliminary studies, just completed, indicate that the specimens represent a curious armoured fish called Cephalaspis, previously known mostly from the Old Red Sandstone of Scotland. The Cephalaspis had a broad, semi-circular head, rather like a horse's hoof in shape, from the back of which the flexible, scale-covered body projected. Fishes of this sort are considered very primitive, being distant relatives of the modern lamprey eel. Other fossils obtained include a large, scorpion-like animal, about three feet in length. Plans are being made to return to Gaspe this summer in an endeavour to obtain a larger collection of these rare and important fossils.

COMING EVENTS AT THE ROYAL ONTARIO MUSEUM

March 1 8.15 p.m.	Family Night Travel Films—Wedding of Palo, Eskimo Summer, Gateway to the North.
March 6, 7 and 8 8.30 p.m.	L'ECOLE DES FEMMES—New Play Society.
March 14 and 15 8.15 p.m.	Family Night Travel Films—Treasure Trove of Jade, Monuments of Ancient Mexico, Native Arts of Old Mexico.
March 20, 21 and 22 8.30 p.m.	THE TIME OF YOUR LIFE—New Play Society.
March	Special Exhibition Gallery — NATIVE LIFE IN FORMOSA — Group of household Gods and various articles of daily use.

INDIANS LIKED MAPLE SUGAR, TOO

Among the few contributions of the American Indian to our civilization was the art of making maple sugar. The process was comparatively crude. After slashing the tree slantwise with a tomahawk, a wooden chip or spout was inserted to guide the fluid into birch bark pails resting on the ground. A number of such receptacles are on display in the Royal Ontario Museum, varying in size and design.

One of the methods of boiling down the sap was to use earthenware pots. The other was to drop red-hot stones into a sap trough such as those commonly used by the Mohawks—hollowed-out basswood logs. In the latter process, the stones were removed when cold and more hot ones dropped in so that the boiling down was accomplished only after a great deal of labour. Although poor in quality and meagre in quantity, the product thus obtained was a highly valued one, being the only sugar available.

SPRING IS LITERALLY IN THE AIR

With the return of Canadian songsters, most of whom have spent the winter somewhere between the Ohio Valley and the Gulf States one is reminded that spring is on its way.

The early migrants are horned larks, appearing anywhere from the middle to the end of February, followed by crows early in March.

During the month of March they are joined by robins, coming in numbers around the middle or third week and sometimes earlier; bluebirds, killdeers, redwings, bronzed grackles, meadowlarks, cowbirds, phoebes, flickers and song sparrows.

Ornothologists at the Royal Ontario Museum estimate that birds require one day to fly from London to Hamilton, 9 days from London to Toronto, 10 days to Ottawa, 12 days to Collingwood, 14 to Sault Ste Marie, 16 to Fort William, and 33 to Cochrane.

EXHIBITION OF PRINTS TO OPEN MARCH 1

The current exhibition of prints now on view in the print gallery of the Royal Ontario Museum of Archaeology contains a selection of lithographs from the Museum's collection of prints. It provides an excellent opportunity to study the variety of techniques possible in this very popular medium which was invented early in the 19th century and which today stands foremost among the commercial printing processes. The prints include several charming landscapes by Eugene Isabey and amusing and clever caricatures by Daumier and Gavarni, all of whom were celebrated French lithographers in the 19th century. Richard Bonington, the well-known English exponent of this medium is also represented. Views of towns and countryside illustrate his masterly handling of both landscape and architectural subjects.

Further examples of the printmaker's art may be seen in the annual exhibition of the Society of Canadian Painter-Etchers and Engravers, now on view in the Japanese Print Gallery. Here one has an opportunity to see the most recent work of this active group. Etchings, drypoints, wood-engravings and lino cuts are among the mediums shown, including some very interesting examples of the possibilities of these techniques.